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ABSTRACT

In an effort to assess the educational needs of bilingual/bicultural Americans and the extent to which community colleges are meeting these needs, this essay cites numerous studies that have focused on various aspects of the issue of bilingual/bicultural education. First, the review refers to studies acknowledging the benefits of bilingual education and other studies that reveal the lengthy history of bilingual programs, as well as the rarity of such programs. Next, the differences between "equal access" and "equal benefits" are discussed, and two models for bilingual education--the Maintenance Model and the Transitional Model--are considered. Subsequently, legislation is pointed to which provides federal aid for the development of bilingual programs, and then, the implications that ensuring legislation and judicial decisions have for the community college are discussed. Next, the key position of the bilingual teacher aide is analyzed, and studies that have examined the role, responsibilities, training, and attitudes of the bilingual teacher aide are reviewed. Finally, several recommendations are made. These recommendations focus on the importance of bilingual aides, community college responsibilities, the creation of a National Resource Center for the training of teacher aides and paraprofessionals. The functions of this Center are enumerated, and a bibliography included. (AYC)

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BILINGUAL-BICULTURAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND CAPABILITIES OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES

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ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE FOR JUNIOR COLLEGES
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BILINGUAL-BICULTURAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND CAPABILITIES OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Many public educational institutions acknowledge the research findings that the best medium of instruction is the native language, and that skills training should be provided in the native tongue. Sometimes they continue to provide literacy instruction in English to Spanish speakers who are thereby deprived of equal educational opportunities.

This anomaly is demonstrated by a national study conducted in 1979 when letters were sent to some 250 community colleges requesting information about the ways institutions were addressing the educational needs of Spanish-speaking students. Of the 26 institutions that had some activities, twelve indicated comprehensive programs of bilingual education, nine indicated more of an ESL focus in their offerings, and five submitted lists of courses, i.e., Spanish I and II, ESL.

Follow-up telephone calls and visits to community colleges in heavily Hispanic populated areas indicated a decided lack of programs designed to address the educational needs of Hispanics. Despite the interest and sincerity of many college administrators and instructors, they seem unable to conceptualize and design programs for Hispanics, continue to think in terms of traditional course offerings, and fail to understand that linguistically distinct populations have different learning styles from typical learners.

Yet, bilingual education is not a new concept. In many societies the ability to speak, read, and write in more than one language has always been considered a mark of an educated person. Bilingual educational programs have existed in Europe for years, but their inception in public schools in this country is very recent. Early programs include Miami's Coral Way School Program, started in 1963 for recently-arrived Cuban children in grades one to three, which is still viewed as a model program. Other successful programs operate in Texas' San Antonio Independent School District and the United Consolidated School District of Laredo.

Bilingual-Bicultural Education

Providing equal opportunities to Americans of culturally and linguistically distinct backgrounds has become one of this country's most pressing domestic issues (Mazon, 1974). Arciniega (1973), for example, discusses two different approaches to equality in education — equal "access" and equal "benefits." The equal access approach implies that every ethnic group has an equal opportunity to attend an equally staffed and equally supplied school. The equal benefits view holds that an equal opportunity is provided when each group accrues equal benefits from schooling.

In relating the "equal benefits" point to bilingual-bicultural education, Mazon (1976) holds that equality of education occurs when each *individual*, rather than each group, derives equal benefits from schooling. He points out that bilingual-bicultural education provides students of limited English-speaking and non-English-speaking ability with equal benefits by utilizing their native language for instruction while they acquire proficiency in English. He further maintains that since bilingual-bicultural education builds upon a positive view of students' cultural and linguistic heritage, it provides opportunities to experience early academic success and conceptual development in the native language, to maintain the culture and language of the home, and to learn the language of the school. The native language serves as the medium of instruction until English can serve as a co-equal linguistic tool enabling students to become bilingual. Thus, bilingualism/biculturalism implies the ability to communicate and to function in two cultures.

Although proponents disagree about what bilingual education is, what it should be, what its goals are, and who should benefit from it, two models are generally discussed. The *Maintenance Model* teaches basic skills in two languages and uses both languages throughout the entire school program. The *Transitional Model* teaches basic skills in the home language until students learn English so that it becomes the medium of instruction.

Legislation

In 1966 the National Education Association sponsored a conference that focused on problems involved in the teaching of "other language" children through bilingual education. The meeting concluded with a pledge to build "bridges of understanding" and to work for bilingual educational programs at all levels of education and government (NEA Report, 1966). Subsequently, Senators Joseph Montoya and Ralph Yarbrough drafted the Bilingual Education Act, which was passed by Congress in 1968 as Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

A 1974 amendment, introduced by Senators Alan Cranston, Joseph Montoya and Edward M. Kennedy, made some significant changes in program scope and purpose, and provided direction concerning the populations targeted by this program. The Senate subsequently declared that programs funded under the Bilingual Education Act must involve the use of both English and the native language as mediums of instruction in the basic school curriculum and must also include the study of

history and culture of the language. The comprehensive program in the Act is designed to develop and reinforce the student's self-esteem and to foster a legitimate pride in both cultures (Congressional Record, 1974).

Although the major thrust of this program is aimed at elementary school programs, where the greatest need exists and where the greatest benefits can accrue, the Act also provides for preschool and secondary levels. Through the efforts of El Congreso Nacional de Asuntos Colegiales (CONAC), community colleges are now part of this Act and are eligible to apply for federal assistance to establish bilingual programs.

In 1976, 326 classroom projects in 41 languages received a total of $53,370,000; a network of 17 bilingual education centers received close to $10 million to develop and disseminate materials and to provide training for local school districts; 36 Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) received a total of $3,736,087 to develop and expand their bilingual education training; and IHE was awarded $3 million for graduate fellowships (Bilingual Review, 1975). Presently, there are 565 classroom projects, 39 centers, and 142 training programs, with a total budget of $150 million. The participation of community colleges has been minute, however. Out of 350 community colleges enrolling high percentages of bilingual students throughout the country, only twenty applied for federal monies and only nine are presently funded.

Immediate Implications for Community Colleges

Bilingual education, its ensuring legislation, and judicial decisions mandating bilingual programs for students whose language proficiency is other-than-English have presented serious personnel problems for school districts across the country. Only teachers trained in approved teacher training institutions and certified by state certification agencies can be hired to teach. The preparation that teachers receive for certified purposes is in English, and pertains predominantly to the English-speaking student. In most instances, Spanish-speaking certified teachers cannot teach in Spanish because they were trained in English. This inability to function in a new role, fear of change, and fear of job loss are threatening considerations to teachers who find themselves in bilingual programs. Retraining efforts are often met with resistance, boards of education and administrators are reluctant to allow released time for training, teachers are unwilling to give up their out-of-school hours, and colleges of education are not geared to adequately prepare teachers for bilingual classrooms.

Some community colleges, however, have played tremendous roles in the training of teacher aides. According to the National Office of Bilingual Education, of the 13 colleges offering bilingual programs, some of the best teacher aides programs are to be found at Mesa and Pima Community Colleges in Arizona, San Jose City College in California, Miami-Dade in Florida, and Hostos Community College and La Guardia Community College in New York.

Despite these efforts, the study noted earlier established minimal interest in community colleges with large bilingual enrollments. It is our feeling that community colleges must make an honest effort to meet the educational needs of its community, particularly when financial assistance is available. The colleges should also enlighten local community organizations, which already have student recruitment and bilingual personnel mechanisms, and form educational cooperative arrangements, which would be beneficial to both. Alfredo de los Santos, former president at El Paso Community College in Texas, established such a program, and three others operate at Pima College in Arizona, Miami-Dade Community College, Florida and Hostos Community College in New York.

The Bilingual Teacher Aide

Due to the inability of monolingual teachers to communicate with limited English-proficient students, the role of the bilingual teacher aide has assumed a primary function. But because school districts and teacher training institutions have not given enough attention to this emerging role, many bilingual teacher aides find themselves in situations for which they are not adequately prepared. Aides, who are selected for bilingual programs and who belong to the target culture, are responsible for the instruction of linguistically distinct students with little, if any, pedagogical preparation (La Fontaine, 1971). In a study conducted by Casso (1975), 54 percent of school district personnel surveyed indicated that aides provided the Spanish language instruction in their classroom. Little, if any, formal assessment is made of their linguistic skills and their cultural awareness. And little has been done by teacher training institutions to identify essential knowledge, competencies, and skills necessary for teacher aides to function adequately as team and/or lead instructors in bilingual classrooms.

A study of teacher aide needs indicated that although the role has changed to primarily an instructional one, the negative attitude toward aides has not changed (Barrón, 1979). Aides are still in secondary status positions, receiving little educational guidance or direction from teachers and administrators. While there is a definite interest among teacher aides to participate in school improvement committees, much resistance exists among administrators and teachers to actively involve them. The aides feel that they are not qualified to give input and they feel intimidated by the school personnel.

Even though bilingual teacher aides are significantly involved in actual teaching activities because monolingual teachers are unable to communicate with Spanish-speaking students, sequential training for the classroom methodology does not exist. Very few teacher aides are enrolled in career ladder academic programs leading to professional status. The sporadic training that is available to them, according to this study, is not monitored or controlled. It usually consists of a series of courses that are often irrelevant because they are not based on a sequence of competencies. Colleges do not offer bilingual training to aides as part of the core curricula, and they lack qualified bilingual faculty. The monolingual teachers with whom the aides work often do not support bilingual programs.

The bulk of the training that teacher aides receive consists of short-term workshops, usually presented by consultants. A few aides are enrolled in community college courses, many of which are taught by professors who

themselves have had no formal training in bilingual teaching. The training relies heavily on the use of textbooks. Little opportunity is provided for interaction and exchange of ideas. There is little evidence that the aides participate in training activities with culturally and linguistically distinct students. Community-based training activities are not evident and virtually all the training is conducted in English. Although bilingual education is legislatively established and judicially mandated, bilingual programs rely entirely on federal funds for support and continue to be treated in a compensatory manner by educational institutions. According to our study, educators have not involved the broader community by actively including bilingual parents in their policy-making processes. They remain unwilling to accept the validity of experimental learning, thereby, depriving students of the learning benefits from well planned community-based activities.

The newsletter is the most common means of disseminating information about bilingual education programs. The aides are not provided an opportunity to interact and exchange ideas. It was also found that professional organizations have had no influence on bilingual education. The National Association of Bilingual Education (NABE) and state bilingual organizations have not reached out to teachers or teacher aides. These organizations are dominated by college and school district professional personnel who reflect the same negative attitude toward bilingual aides and parental involvement that exists in many institutions.

The most significant results of the authors' study is the fact that teacher aides know that they need training, want to be trained, and know what competencies are needed to adequately function in their instructional roles. The following is a list of such competencies:

1. Knowledge about the philosophy of bilingual education. This will include knowledge of the what, why and how of bilingual programs, the characteristics of children involved and knowledge of the rules, regulations and guidelines that govern bilingual education.
2. Knowledge about bilingual education practices, techniques and methodology.
3. Knowledge about parental and community involvement in bilingual programs.
4. Knowledge about program planning, organization implementation, and evaluation.
5. Knowledge of specific ways that parents can become involved in programs.
6. Knowledge about the policy and decision-making processes of the school.
7. Specific information on how parents can influence the decision-making processes of school districts.
8. Knowledge on how to become informed and effective participants in school affairs.
9. Knowledge on specific curriculum areas in bilingual programs — what is involved in teaching bilingually.
10. Training in specific teaching methodology in the content areas.
11. Training in the use of materials in bilingual education.
12. Training in small group and individualized instruction techniques.
13. Training in positive reinforcement techniques in the development of positive self-concepts.
14. Training in the various models of bilingual education.
15. Training in group dynamics, conflict resolution, communication techniques, and leadership skills.
16. Training in multicultural awareness.
17. Training in school law, education code, legal rights of parents.
18. Training in parliamentary procedures.
19. Training in school budgeting and finance.

Recommendations

Community colleges serving Hispanic enrollments should conduct careful evaluations of their coursework in light of these competencies. An evaluation committee, composed of teacher aides, parents, professors, and administrators, should be assembled to examine the coursework in light of the recommendations. Instructional objectives based on the competencies offered here should be incorporated into existing coursework and/or design new courses. All coursework offered in training bilingual teacher aides should include field-based experiences with target language students and parents. The training should be bilingual, utilizing the target language. The coursework should utilize a variety of resources and techniques and should not rely solely on textbooks.

Community colleges located in heavily populated bilingual communities must assume the responsibility for educating community members. These institutions may apply for federal grants to establish bilingual programs, thus offering a better educational delivery to the linguistically distinct. Local organizations already have a mechanism for educational programs. Community colleges can easily use that network and enter into a cooperative mutually beneficial for everyone.

The results of our study (1979) indicates that the utilization of bilingual teacher aides is the key to bilingual programs. This is also a feasible solution to the personnel problems faced by school districts in implementing mandated bilingual programs. It is recommended that a National Resource Center for the training of teacher aides and paraprofessionals be established in the new Department of Education within the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs. The Center would focus primarily on:

1. The role of the bilingual teacher aides.
2. The training of teacher aides.
3. The training of teachers and administrators in the utilization of the teachers aides.
4. The identification and development of training and instructional materials for use by bilingual aides and training personnel.
5. Parental and community involvement in bilingual education.
6. Training parents to become effective agents of change.

7. The training of school district and community college personnel in the effective utilization of parents in decision-making situations.
8. Developing and circulating information relevant to teacher aides, parents and other instructional personnel in bilingual education.

This Center should not be university-based, nor should it be school district or community college controlled. It should have strong parental and bilingual teacher aide input from its development to the actual implementation of the program.

In conclusion, we note that community colleges enroll 38.8 percent of the nation's minority students (American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, 1979). Almost one-fourth of the two-year college enrollment is from a minority group. According to this report, the Hispanic enrollment in community colleges has increased by 65 percent. Given the statistics, community colleges with large Hispanic enrollments must develop responsive educational programs for this student population.

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